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New York

President: Mr. Opertti ..... (Uruguay)

The meeting was called to order at 10.35 a.m.

Agenda item 40 (*continued*)

The situation in the Middle East

Reports of the Secretary-General (A/53/550 and A/53/652)

Draft resolutions (A/53/L.52 and A/53/L.53 and Corr.1)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Qatar to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.52.

Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar) (*interpretation from Arabic*): On behalf of the State of Qatar, which is presiding over the twenty-fifth meeting of the Ministers for Foreign Affairs of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, I am pleased to introduce, under agenda item 40 on the situation in the Middle East, draft resolution A/53/L.52, entitled "Jerusalem", on behalf of its sponsors, which have been joined by Bahrain and Indonesia.

The formula of this year's draft resolution is the same as last year's. The preamble contains three paragraphs and the operative part four. The first preambular paragraph recalls the General Assembly resolutions relevant to Jerusalem, particularly those that were adopted between 1981 and last year, all of which determine that all actions taken by Israel in Jerusalem are illegal and null and void.

The second preambular paragraph recalls Security Council resolution 478 (1980) in which the Council, *inter alia*, decided not to recognize the "Basic Law" and called upon those States which had established diplomatic missions at Jerusalem to withdraw such missions from the Holy City.

Operative paragraph 1 determines that the decision of Israel to impose its legal jurisdiction and administration on the Holy City of Jerusalem is illegal and therefore null and void and has no validity whatsoever. Operative paragraph 2 deplores the transfer by some States of their diplomatic missions to Jerusalem in violation of Security Council resolution 478 (1980), to which I referred earlier.

Operative paragraph 3 calls once more on those States to abide by the provisions of the relevant United Nations resolutions, in conformity with the Charter of the United Nations. The last operative paragraph requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifty-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution.

The sponsors of the draft resolution hope that it will gain the support of all States.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call on the representative of Egypt to introduce draft resolution A/53/L.53.

98-86584 (E)

This record contains the original text of speeches delivered in English and interpretations of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to original speeches only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and be sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, *within one month of the date of the meeting*, to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, Room C-178. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt)(*interpretation from Arabic*): Allow me to introduce to the General Assembly the draft resolution entitled "The situation in the Middle East: the Syrian Golan", as contained in document A/53/L.53. In addition to Egypt, Bangladesh, the Comoros, Cuba, Djibouti, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen and Palestine, Bahrain and Indonesia have become sponsors of the draft resolution.

The third preambular paragraph contains a reference to Security Council resolution 497 (1981) regarding the illegal annexation of the Syrian Golan by Israel. The fourth preambular paragraph reaffirms the fundamental principle of the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force, in accordance with international law and the Charter of the United Nations. Preambular paragraph 5 reaffirms the applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War to the occupied Syrian Golan.

The sixth preambular paragraph refers to the General Assembly's deep concern that Israel has not withdrawn from the Syrian Golan, which has been under occupation since 1967, to the line of 4 June 1967. The illegality of the settlement construction and activities in the occupied Syrian Golan since 1967 is referred to in the seventh preambular paragraph.

The draft resolution notes the convening of the Madrid Peace Conference in 1991, on the basis of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and the formula of land for peace, which is the core of the peace process. The last preambular paragraph refers to the General Assembly's grave concern over the halt in the peace process on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks, and expresses the hope that peace talks will soon resume from the point they had reached.

Operative paragraph 1 declares that Israel has failed so far to comply with Security Council resolution 497 (1981). Operative paragraph 2 declares that the Israeli decision of 14 December 1981 to impose its laws, jurisdiction and administration on the occupied Syrian Golan is null and void and has no validity whatsoever, and calls on Israel to rescind it.

Operative paragraph 3 reaffirms that all relevant provisions of the 1949 Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War apply to the Syrian Golan occupied by Israel since 1967. Operative paragraph 4 determines once more that the continued occupation of the Syrian Golan and its de facto annexation constitute a stumbling block in the way of achieving a just, comprehensive and lasting peace in the region. Operative paragraph 5 of the draft resolution calls upon Israel to resume the talks on the Syrian and Lebanese tracks and to respect the commitments and undertakings reached during the previous talks.

Operative paragraph 7 calls upon all the parties concerned, the co-sponsors of the peace process and the entire international community to exert all the necessary efforts to ensure the resumption of the peace process and its success. The last operative paragraph requests the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its fifth-fourth session on the implementation of the resolution.

In conclusion, I introduce this draft resolution to the General Assembly on behalf of the sponsors and appeal to delegations to vote in favour of it, as it embodies the main principles of the Charter of the United Nations and calls for the achievement of justice and to end the Israeli occupation of the Syrian Golan.

Mr. Yel'chenko (Ukraine): As we can all see, the situation in the Middle East continues to be among the most acute subjects on the agenda of the General Assembly.

It has become a long-lasting reality that for many consecutive years, the General Assembly, at its annual sessions, again and again addresses the issues related to the Middle East peace process under numerous agenda items with a view to encouraging all the parties concerned to return to the negotiating table, to refrain from any unilateral actions fraught with negative consequences for the peace process, to fulfil their obligations under international law and to respect their bilateral agreements.

We do not think that this should last for ever. We believe that, as the world is nearing a new millennium, the time has come to enter the final phase of establishing lasting peace and stability in the Middle East region. Therefore, we feel that after all these years, all the parties to the process, both Arab and Israeli, should overcome their hostility towards and mistrust of each other, stop their mutual accusations and, finally, complete the implementation of the Madrid peace process formula, based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), as well as on the principle of land for peace.

At the same time, the international community should neither relax its attention nor weaken its attempts to move all negotiating tracks of the Middle East peace process forward. Undoubtedly, a special responsibility in these efforts continues to be placed on the United Nations.

Over the past year, this world Organization remained at the forefront of securing peace in the Middle East through maintaining its peacekeeping operations and reviewing the situation in the region in the General Assembly, the Security Council and other relevant bodies.

In this context, Ukraine commends the active role played by the Secretary-General. In particular, we applauded his successful diplomatic mission to Iraq last February and welcomed his visits to a number of countries of the region last spring to encourage the peace process. I would also like to recall the visit by the President of the General Assembly at its fifty-second session to Lebanon last August, which was an important undertaking.

Ukraine highly regards and remains supportive of the efforts made by the sponsors of the Middle East peace process, the European Union, international organizations, individual States and prominent political figures on the road to the comprehensive settlement of this problem.

Currently, the various tracks of Arab-Israeli negotiations are facing difficult periods of stalemate, though sometimes a glimmer of hope for better prospects emerges. First of all, this relates to the question of Palestine, which continues to constitute the pivotal part of the entire peace process in the Middle East. Since my delegation spoke on agenda item 39 at length yesterday, I will limit myself to a few remarks.

The signing of the Wye River Memorandum on 23 October 1998 by the Prime Minister of Israel and the President of the Palestinian Authority was warmly welcomed in Ukraine as a vivid demonstration by the two parties of their political will to find mutually acceptable solutions. While praising the enormous efforts of both sides, as well as the decisive contribution made by the United States to the conclusion of this very important agreement, we hope that no unreasonable steps will prevent the two parties from implementing its provisions promptly and in full.

We believe that in the near future historical justice should be attained with regard to the aspirations of the Palestinian people, which will then be in a position to realize its inalienable right to self-determination, including its long-awaited dream of statehood. In this context, we also believe that the legitimate right of the Israeli people to live in a safe environment and within secure borders will be ensured.

The comprehensive settlement of the Middle East situation will hardly be possible without the positive outcome of the Israeli-Syrian negotiating process, which has to be reinjected with new momentum. It is in the interests of the parties and, indeed, of the whole region that the parties resume their talks on the problem of the occupied Syrian Golan without further delay.

As regards the Israeli-Lebanese track, my delegation maintains the position that Security Council resolution 425 (1978) constitutes the only basis for resolving the problem of southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa. We welcome the Israeli acceptance of this resolution and expect its implementation.

In Ukraine's view, the current state of Israeli-Jordanian relations gives reasons for optimism. The signing by the two countries of The Treaty of Peace in 1994 can serve as a good example of what peace can bring to the region and to each individual nation. We also acknowledge the tireless efforts of King Hussein of Jordan in the peace process, in particular his recent personal input for the success of the Wye River negotiations.

Although, geographically, Ukraine is not an immediate neighbour of the Middle East, the development of mutually beneficial and partnership relations, on both a bilateral and a multilateral basis, with all the countries of the region, as well as facilitating the peace process, is one of the pillars of my country's multi-vectoral foreign policy.

In this respect, I would like to reiterate Ukraine's readiness to extend its contribution to the various economic projects now under way in the framework of the multilateral working groups on the problems of Middle East economic cooperation. On the basis of its six years of experience in United Nations peacekeeping activities, Ukraine also feels capable of providing military and civilian personnel for the ongoing United Nations peacekeeping operations in the Middle East.

Let me conclude by voicing Ukraine's sincere hope that the multifaceted Middle East problem will find its eventual solution in the near future, and that durable peace and accord will be restored there to reign among

the peoples of the region for ever. Ukraine remains committed to achieving this noble goal.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) *(interpretation from Arabic):* The situation in the Middle East, which the Assembly considers each year, is basically characterized by the region's strategic location, its enormous spiritual, material and cultural heritage and its age-old civilization.

By dint of its crucial importance it may be considered to be a true barometer of the state of peace and security in the world. That is why the Arab-Israeli conflict has always been at the top of the international community's list of priorities.

Syria has always wanted peace in the Middle East to be established on the basis of comprehensiveness, justice and dignity. This is why Syria feels it necessary to bring to the attention of the Assembly the reality of the positions of the current Israeli Government so that the international community and, first and foremost, the sponsors of the peace process can be aware of the dangerous developments that may plunge the Middle East into violence and instability.

That position is characterized by, first, Israel's gradual departure from all the conventions and agreements concluded between the parties during the peace talks, to the point of invalidating the peace process which was begun in Madrid. The policies pursued by the Israeli Government have led to freezing the peace process on the ground. Secondly, Israel's carefully orchestrated policy is fragmenting the peace process — a situation which is not in keeping with the concept of an overall peace agreed on in Madrid. Thirdly, it is odd that the Israeli Government does not recognize the formula of land for peace, which was the essence of the American initiative announced by President Bush before Congress in March 1991, when he said that a just peace must be based on Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and on the principle of land for peace. It is that same principle which was one of the pillars of the peace process in Madrid, in addition to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978). The Arab Summit in Cairo in 1996 reaffirmed those principles, as have the summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, the Islamic Summit Conference and all the statements of the European Union, including the statement by Austria, currently holding the Presidency of the European Union, before the Assembly. However, the representative of the Israeli Government endeavours to present alternative formulas, such as peace for peace, or peace for security. This erroneous stance, which seeks to establish security before putting an end to the occupation, will convert the peace process into a process of fighting and bloodshed. It will achieve neither security nor peace for Israel, and thus may restart the Arab-Israeli conflict from its tragic beginnings, which we have all worked to avert. Fourthly, Israel is engaged in an unbridled policy of settlement construction in the Syrian Golan and in the occupied territories of Palestine, especially in Arab Jerusalem, in an effort to alter the geography and demography of those territories, in disregard of the 1949 Geneva Convention, the relevant decisions of the Security Council and the repeated condemnations of the international community, which considers this settlement policy a major obstacle to peace.

The Israeli Government has bolstered this policy by inciting Israeli settlers to occupy and seize occupied Arab lands, and is systematically working to change the geographic and demographic character of Jerusalem by expelling Palestinians and establishing settlements in and around the city in violation of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949 — the Fourth Geneva Convention — and the United Nations Charter. Israel's aim is to annex Jerusalem. This proves that Israel is once again ignoring Security Council resolutions 465 (1980) and 478 (1980).

Fifthly, Israel continues to detain thousands of Palestinians in Israeli jails; Lebanese detainees too languish in detention camps and are subjected to torture and persecution.

Finally, Israel continues persistently to violate the Fourth Geneva Convention, and to challenge the principles of international law and relevant United Nations resolutions. This is reflected in the decision a few months ago by the legal and constitutional committee of the Knesset to authorize the first reading of a bill to build up the military presence in the Golan and in East Jerusalem. It is now reported that the bill will be adopted within the next two weeks. This is further proof that the Israeli Government and the Knesset are determined to ignore Security Council resolution 497 (1981) and the will of the international community, and to undermine the peace process.

Let us compare our position on the peace process with that of the Israelis. First of all, we agree to the Madrid principles, first and foremost the principle of land for peace, while Israel rejects the principles that constitute the foundation of the Madrid peace process,

rejects the principle of land for peace, and seeks instead to trade peace for peace, or peace for security. We favour the resumption of the peace talks from the point at which they were suspended, while Israel refuses to resume them from that point: it insists on returning to the zero point after lengthy and arduous negotiations have taken place.

We call for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978) and of the principle of land for peace, and insist that Israel withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, and that it withdraw from southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa. Israel, on the other hand, refuses to withdraw from the Golan on the lame pretext that this is a security matter, or for other equally mythical reasons. It also refuses to withdraw unconditionally from southern Lebanon in accordance with Security Council resolution 425 (1978).

We are committed to the implementation of the various agreements concluded as part of the peace process, while Israel is turning its back on them and is attempting to evade the principles agreed upon at Madrid. We call for the return of all occupied Arab territories, including Jerusalem, in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, and demand the restoration of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, while Israel rejects this and continues stubbornly to allege that Jerusalem is the "eternal capital" of Israel. We are in favour of a comprehensive, honourable and just peace that would restore dignity to all, while Israel seeks no such peace and is trying to avoid a peace that would allow all to live in dignity.

There is international unanimity on the need to continue the peace process on the basis of the resolutions of international legitimacy and on the basis of the principle of land for peace, a principle that has been reaffirmed by Arab Summits, including that held at Cairo in 1996, and by summits of the League of Arab States, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the Movement of Non-Aligned Countries, as well as by statements issued by the European Union. All these bodies have called for the resumption of peace talks with Syria and Lebanon from the point at which they were suspended, for complete Israeli withdrawal from all occupied Palestinian territories, including Jerusalem, and from the occupied Syrian Golan to the line of 4 June 1967, and for complete, unconditional withdrawal from southern Lebanon and the western Bekaa, as well as for guarantees of the legitimate national rights of the Palestinian people, including its right to self-determination and to the establishment of a State of its own on its own national territory.

In the light of all those facts, my delegation endorses the draft resolution on the Syrian Golan, contained in A/53/L.53 and submitted under the agenda item "The situation in the Middle East". Similar texts are submitted each year; this year's draft resolution does not differ in substance from that adopted by the General Assembly last year. It conforms to the decisions taken at the Arab summit held in Cairo in 1996, the Durban summit of the Non-Aligned Movement, and the Islamic summit held in Teheran, and to international law and the Fourth Geneva Convention. It is also in line with the principles for peace agreed upon at Madrid and enjoys the support of the international community. In this context, I issue an appeal: let the rule of law triumph, to help peoples suffering under occupation and to assist the Arab peoples of Syria, Lebanon and Palestine in recovering their occupied lands.

I warmly thank my brother, the representative of Egypt, for introducing draft resolution A/53/L.53 and I call upon the international community to support it.

This Organization has a key role to play in combatting injustice, repression and persecution, because it is the conscience of humanity with respect to settlerism, occupation, and the consequences of extremism. In this regard, I call upon the co-sponsors of the peace process, the European Union and all friendly countries to exert all forms of political and economic pressure on Israel to rescue the peace process from its paralysis and to attain tangible progress along the vital Syrian and the Lebanese tracks, which are intertwined. We reaffirm that Israel's contempt for United Nations resolutions and international conventions poses a challenge to the entire international community, and especially, to the relevant Security Council resolutions. The establishment of a comprehensive, genuine and honourable peace in the Middle East does not, in any way, accord with the policy of occupation and settlement construction in the occupied Arab territories. A just and comprehensive peace cannot coexist with inciting Israeli settlers to seize occupied Arab lands. It cannot coexist with the seizure by the Israeli Government of Arab lands, the construction of settlements, the destruction of houses, the expansion of existing settlements, and the armed aggression against Palestinians in the occupied territories in violation of Security Council resolutions 465 (1980) and 478 (1980) and of the principles of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

To conclude, it has become apparent that Israel is not complying with international resolutions and that it is

basing itself on all kinds of legends and religious myths, which we heard yesterday. These provocative legends and myths are baseless and have one objective: to perpetuate occupation and expansionism, which are internationally condemned. This makes it essential for the international community to adopt all necessary measures to bring Israel back onto the path towards a just and comprehensive peace.

Mr. Zackheos (Cyprus): My delegation associated itself with the statement of the European Union. In view of the special significance we attach to the Middle East situation, I would like to make a few additional comments and observations.

The long and rich history of Cyprus has been greatly influenced by developments in the Middle East. Situated at the crossroads of Europe, Africa and Asia, my country has throughout the centuries been a bridge between the peoples of the Middle East and Europe. While seeking to maintain and strengthen our ties with the European Union, with which we have begun substantive accession negotiations, the promotion of our relations with all our neighbours in the Middle East also remains a significant pillar of our foreign policy.

My Government supports all the initiatives and efforts aimed at finding a comprehensive solution to the Middle East problem. We reaffirm our support for the implementation of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978), which provide the framework for a viable peace in the Middle East. At the same time, we recognize the right of all States to exist in peace with their neighbours, within safe and internationally recognized borders. We denounce terrorism and violence against innocent civilians in the strongest terms.

Closely following developments in the Middle East and conscious of the precarious nature of the peace process, we have been highlighting the need to redouble the efforts for the successful outcome of the process, upon which millions of people — both in the region and internationally — have pinned great hopes.

The Cyprus Government has welcomed the recent agreement at Wye River Plantation. We commended the parties for their agreement, and the United States Administration and President Clinton in particular, as well as King Hussein of Jordan, for their efforts in achieving this breakthrough. We have been encouraged by the steps taken for the implementation of the agreement, including the recent opening of Gaza International Airport. At the same time, the breakthrough shows that when there is political will on the part of the sides and sustained international efforts and influence, regional conflicts can be resolved. We hold this to be true also in the case of the Cyprus problem.

The Government of Cyprus remains committed to playing its part in a practical way to enhance the peace process. In this regard, we express our belief that in order to have stability, the agreements between the parties should be fully implemented. There is no other way to achieve stability in that sensitive region than through a peaceful solution reached through negotiations, reconciliation, trust and cooperation. For this to happen, it is essential to avoid measures that place obstacles in the way of the implementation of the peace process, including the closure of Palestinian territories and the building of settlements, which make it more difficult to move the peace process forward. At the same time, the economic advancement of the Palestinian people remains a determining factor for stability and ultimate rapprochement in the Middle East. For this reason, the Government of Cyprus prepared a special programme of economic assistance to the Palestinian people, at a cost of about $2.2 million, which is currently being implemented.

While we consider the Palestinian problem the core issue of the Middle East conflict, we support the resumption of the negotiations between Israel and Syria and the opening of talks between Israel and Lebanon. A fundamental element of our policy in the Middle East and with regard to other regional issues is the withdrawal of foreign forces from occupied territories. Cyprus offered to host any meeting that may be convened within the context of the bilateral negotiations. This offer remains open.

It is recalled that Cyprus has been chosen as the seat of the Israel-Lebanon Monitoring Group. It is also an honour for us that the European Union's Special Envoy to the Middle East peace process, Ambassador Moratinos, has chosen Cyprus as his headquarters in the area.

The prospect of a peaceful and prosperous Middle East is a vision cherished by all. It cannot be secured by unilateral actions, violence or military build-up, but by a common vision of a better future through economic progress, stability and social justice. It is the hope of my country that this dream will not be lost.

Mr. Suh Dae-won (Republic of Korea): The Republic of Korea notes with satisfaction the recent agreement signed between Israel and Palestine at the Wye River Plantation talks. Indeed, this is a breakthrough in the peace process, which was moribund for over two years. We are convinced that the Wye River Memorandum will contribute to putting the peace process in the Middle East back on track. In this regard, my delegation commends the efforts, wisdom and courage of the leaders involved in the negotiation process of the Memorandum.

The Wye River Memorandum stipulates mutual benefits for both Palestine and Israel. The area under the Palestinian Authority would represent some 40 per cent of the West Bank. It also provides for an airport, a seaport and safe passage between Gaza and the West Bank for Palestinians. The Israelis will also benefit from this agreement. The security conditions in Israel will be much improved, ensuring greater safety for all of Israel's citizens.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the redeployment of Israeli troops from Jenin and the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israeli jails. In addition, we congratulate the inauguration of the first international airport in Gaza, on 24 November 1998, which enables Palestinians to establish direct air links with the outside world.

However, we are disappointed that the Israeli Government has decided to continue a project for further settlement construction in East Jerusalem, at Har Homa/Jebel Abu Ghneim. The project has been considered a serious stumbling block that has impeded progress over the last two years in the Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations. We are concerned that this project might threaten the full implementation of the Wye agreement. Therefore, we urge the Israeli Government to refrain from further settlement construction.

My delegation wishes to underscore the importance of economic development in the Middle East. It might be obvious from past experience that economic growth and prosperity are prerequisites for genuine peace. In this light, the Government of the Republic of Korea has been committed to economic cooperation with the Palestinians to contribute to bringing peace and stability to the region.

In October 1993, the Government of the Republic of Korea pledged a total of $5 million in grant aid and $10 million in soft loans to the Palestinians at the international conference on assistance to the Palestinians, held in Washington, D.C. Accordingly, we have been providing construction equipment for the presidential seat building in Nablus and medical supplies in grant aid. We will disburse the pledged $10 million in soft loans as soon as the appropriate projects are identified following consultations between the Palestinian Authority and my Government.

Furthermore, it is my pleasure to note that the Government of the Republic of Korea pledged $2 million for 2000-2004 at the Ministerial Conference to Support Middle East Peace and Development held in Washington, D.C., on 30 November 1998. I would like to reaffirm the Republic of Korea's commitment to continue expanding its economic cooperation.

The next six months will be a crucial period for establishing lasting peace in the Middle East. It is our belief that only dialogue and negotiations can secure a lasting peace in the region for all parties concerned. These should be pursued on the basis of the principle of land for peace agreed at the Madrid Peace Conference and enshrined in Security Council resolutions 242 (1967), 338 (1973) and 425 (1978).

In this context, the full implementation of the Wye accord is essential to rebuild the much-needed confidence between the parties involved. At the same time, there should be substantial progress on the Israel-Lebanon and Israel-Syria tracks. Without that progress, we cannot expect the full establishment of peace in the Middle East region.

Bearing in mind that the success of the Middle East peace process will greatly contribute to peace and stability in the rest of the world, the Government of the Republic of Korea remains committed to helping to promote peace, stability and security as well as economic prosperity for all in the region.

Mr. Kolby (Norway): The peace process in the Middle East was brought a significant step forward by the agreement reached in Wye River. The Wye River Memorandum reconfirms the principles of the Oslo accord, and it is now up to the parties to fulfil the conditions of the agreement. There are still serious obstacles to overcome, and difficult and courageous decisions need to be made on both sides.

It is crucial to maintain the renewed momentum and keep the peace process on track through the implementation of all parts of the agreement. The United Nations should encourage the constructive approach that

has been taken by the parties in the past weeks. Norway has therefore, in close cooperation with the Russian Federation and the United States, again this year worked on the draft resolution on the Middle East peace process. However, it has not been possible to gather the needed support for the draft resolution at this time. It is our sincere hope that it will be possible to resubmit the draft at a time when both the sponsors and the parties themselves believe it would be appropriate and useful to again seek this expression of support for the peace process from the international community.

The Wye agreement also paved the way for substantial progress on the interim economic issues. Since the signing of the Memorandum, the international airport has been opened in Gaza, and progress has been made on several other key issues. These events will contribute substantially to the development of Palestinian economy. There will be no lasting peace without economic progress in the Palestinian areas. At the donor conference in Washington on 30 November, the international community demonstrated its support for the parties as they implement the Wye Memorandum and engage in permanent status negotiations. Norway will stand by its commitments.

The determination of the parties to reach an agreement by 4 May 1999 is encouraging. We believe that the United Nations should not only applaud the resumption of the permanent status negotiations, but also actively encourage the parties in their efforts to move forward.

Mr. Crighton (Australia): My delegation takes this opportunity to make a substantive statement on the range of issues affecting peace and security in the Middle East. Of course, I will direct my remarks primarily to the peace process, but I should like also to refer briefly to some other matters such as terrorism, the operations of the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) in Iraq, non-proliferation and disarmament, and landmines.

Australia has, with the rest of the international community, watched with growing concern over most of the past year as the Middle East peace process, which started out with so much promise and hope seven years ago, seemed to be sliding towards a state of almost permanent immobility. All the more reason then that we acclaimed so wholeheartedly the Wye River Memorandum, signed on 23 October between Israel and the Palestinians. The achievement of forward momentum in the Oslo process is a triumph of peace over violence, of negotiation over confrontation, and of common sense over extremism.

Australia commends Prime Minister Netanyahu and Chairman Arafat for their commitment to a lasting and genuine peace. They have stepped forward together despite the difficult circumstances facing each of them. We strongly encourage them to maintain this momentum in implementing the Wye accord and urge the international community to support the cause of peace unstintingly.

The agreement reached at Wye River is a testament also to the unflagging efforts of the United States to get the peace process back on track. Despite being faced with what must have seemed almost insuperable difficulties in finding the common ground necessary for both sides to accept compromise, President Clinton stuck tirelessly to the task. We also wish to pay tribute here to the courageous and inspiring contribution of King Hussein, who once again demonstrated his unswerving commitment to the cause of peace; we thank him for that.

Mr. Jemat (Brunei Darussalam), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Australia is under no illusions about the difficulties still to be overcome in achieving a lasting peace in the Middle East. It could be said that where we are today was always going to be the easy part, before final status negotiations and before the commencement of any real negotiations to address unresolved issues between Israel, Syria and Lebanon.

But it is our hope — and we believe also that of the overwhelming majority of people of goodwill on all sides of the Middle East conflict — that this latest agreement will give a much-needed boost to a process which has as its end goal a permanent, just and comprehensive settlement which will be seen by all sides as equitable and fair.

Australia's policy on the Middle East dispute is based on long-standing and firmly established principles: a fundamental commitment to Israel's right to exist within secure and recognized boundaries, and the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, acknowledging that the ultimate shape of the Palestinian entity, including the possibility of an independent State, is subject to the final status negotiations between the parties directly involved. We strongly support those negotiations and the foundations on which they are based — quite clearly, Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) and the principle of land for peace, the Madrid process and the Oslo Declaration of Principles concluded in 1993.

We also believe that there must be a renewed effort to engage Syria and Lebanon in the negotiating process on the basis of the implementation of Security Council resolution 425 (1978). Only recently we have seen yet another upsurge of violence in southern Lebanon. Australia calls on all parties to re-examine what they can do to reinvigorate negotiations and end that long, dreadful cycle of violence that costs lives and produces little more than deepening the wounds of resentment and mistrust.

Now, while we have some forward progress in the form of the Wye agreement, the international community has again been reminded over the past year of the continuing, and potentially growing, threat of international terrorism. The twin bombings in Kenya and Tanzania reminded us all that terror knows no borders. Australia joined the rest of the world in condemning those acts vehemently and unequivocally. We call on all countries to work together to eradicate the entire infrastructure of terrorism so that such acts can never be repeated. Most importantly, the merchants of terror rely on assistance from, or at least the connivance of, a number of States and their agencies. We call on all members of the international community to take whatever action is necessary to prevent the growth and operation of terrorist organizations.

While we have consistently condemned terrorism in all its forms in the context of the Middle East peace process, we have also called upon all parties to avoid other actions which might undermine efforts to build on the progress already made. As we did last year, and especially because we are entering a particularly fragile period in the current peace process, we repeat that both parties simply must refrain from actions which threaten, or are seen to threaten, that process. And we regard settlement activity in the occupied territories as harmful to that process.

We would also regard any political action by either side which pre-empts the outcome of the current process as destabilizing and a serious threat to the achievement of a lasting peace.

Australia has also consistently expressed its concern over the past year over the emergency special session process. In our explanations of vote, we have stated that we do not believe the process is either appropriate or helpful to the peace process, essentially because we have never found that blaming one party or the other for particular actions encourages an atmosphere conducive to productive discussion.

We note that, yet again, there may be moves to resume the emergency special session. We would find such a development disappointing, and we urge parties to exercise restraint in using United Nations mechanisms when they may erode support for the peace process itself.

We will continue to demonstrate Australia's strong support for the peace process in practical terms. At the Wye donors conference in Washington earlier this week, Australia announced a commitment of 16 million Australian dollars over the next three years. Our contribution will be in areas such as core funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, activities of non-governmental organizations in the fields of employment generation and health services and assistance for Palestinians in the legal and agricultural areas.

Australia is also demonstrating its commitment to peace in the Middle East by its important and continuing contribution to the Multinational Force and Observers in the Sinai and to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, whose Force Commander is currently an Australian.

The ongoing suffering of the Iraqi people — a subject of continuing concern to us — is directly attributable to the unwillingness of Iraq to cooperate with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM). It is the Iraqi leadership which holds the key to alleviating the suffering of the Iraqi people. In the meantime, we continue to support the oil-for-food programme, which goes some way towards relieving the plight of the Iraqi people. We also welcome the Security Council decision to review and expand the oil-for-food programme to improve its effectiveness.

Australia condemned Iraq's announcement on 31 October that it was suspending all cooperation with UNSCOM. We welcome Iraq's eventual rescission of that decision and will be looking to Iraq to cooperate fully and unconditionally with UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). As the Security Council has said, Iraq needs to provide unconditional and sustained cooperation with UNSCOM and the IAEA before the United Nations can move to a comprehensive review of UNSCOM. It is in this light that we find Iraq's refusal to hand over requested documentation to UNSCOM especially disappointing.

Australia is convinced that universal accession of States to multilateral instruments of non-proliferation and

disarmament — particularly the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT), the Chemical Weapons Convention and the Biological Weapons Convention — is essential to the strengthening of peace and international and regional security.

As the situation in Iraq demonstrates, the Middle East is a region where the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their delivery vehicles is a vexed issue. We acknowledge that our common goal of promoting non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction has to be seen within a broader vision of peace in the Middle East. Nonetheless, we strongly urge all States in the Middle East that have not already done so to become parties to all these instruments.

With regard to the NPT, we have warmly welcomed the accession to the Treaty by the United Arab Emirates, Djibouti and Oman since the landmark 1995 NPT Review and Extension Conference. We reiterate our appeal to Israel, as the only regional State yet to accede to the Treaty, to give serious consideration to the security benefits, for itself and for the region, of acceding to the Treaty and placing its nuclear facilities under international safeguards. We also call upon other States of the Middle East which have not yet negotiated full-scope safeguards agreements with the IAEA to do so without delay and, furthermore, to conclude protocols to their bilateral safeguards agreements based on the IAEA's new Model Additional Protocol for strengthened nuclear safeguards.

Australia will continue to work with others to maintain the strength and momentum of the CTBT following the challenge posed by South Asian nuclear testing. To this end, it is vital to build up the institutional fabric of the CTBT Organization and to bring about the widest possible signing and ratification with a view to early entry into force of the Treaty. We urge all countries in the Middle East region which have not yet done so to sign and ratify the CTBT at an early date.

With the conclusion of the CTBT, the fissile material cut-off treaty is the next logical step in multilateral nuclear arms control and disarmament. We thus welcome the fact that States of the region have joined the international consensus to begin negotiations in the Conference on Disarmament on such a treaty. Once concluded, a universal and effectively verifiable fissile material cut-off treaty will serve as a valuable security and confidence-building mechanism in the Middle East and in other areas of tension, such as South Asia, and more broadly. We urge all States of the region to engage constructively in the negotiations on this very important nuclear arms control treaty.

Australia urges Middle East States to contribute to the search for a lasting and comprehensive solution to the humanitarian and economic crisis brought about by anti-personnel landmines. Australia encourages universal adherence to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. For those countries not yet in a position to sign the Ottawa Convention, we urge support for complementary measures as interim steps towards a global ban.

In conclusion, let me return briefly to the prospects for peace in the Middle East. Last year, we expressed the hope that, by the fifty-third session of the General Assembly, we would indeed be able to welcome progress in the peace process. And that we have done, in the full knowledge that the road ahead is still a long and complicated one. It is early days yet to determine whether the Wye agreement will be judged by history as a critical turning point in the peace process. We would caution against expecting too much too fast. However, Israelis and Palestinians alike have made it clear that overwhelming majorities of their populations want the security and safety of a permanent peace.

It is evident from the last seven years that much can be achieved through patient negotiation so long as all parties keep the ultimate goal in mind. Of course, there are injustices and misconceptions aplenty in the day-to-day relationship and we recognize that feelings often run high in a pressure-cooker environment. But what the Wye agreement has shown is that, even in the most adverse circumstances, if cool heads prevail there is a way through the woods. We look forward next year to welcoming further progress towards a lasting settlement and urge the international community to support fully efforts towards that goal, which, in the long run, is in the interests of each and every one of us.

Mr. Larraín (Chile) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Chile's position with regard to the situation in the Middle East is one of total support for the principles of international law. We recognize the inalienable right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, as well as Israel's right to exist within secure and internationally recognized borders under the terms of Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973).

From the outset, Chile welcomed the historic process that began in the Middle East this decade with the holding of the Madrid Conference in 1991 and, in particular, the choice in favour of peace made by Israelis and Palestinians in Oslo in 1993, for which they deserve our deepest appreciation.

We are delighted that, after months of deadlock, the Government of Israel and the Palestinian Authority were able to achieve, with the fundamental support of the United States, a major step forward in the recent Wye discussions, held to give new impetus to an overall agreement.

There will be those who will seek to place difficulties in the way of the peace process by bringing undue pressure to bear, engaging in illegal activities, inciting hatred or committing acts of terrorism, which must not be tolerated. We hope that the leaders on both sides will not allow themselves to be intimidated by threats of this kind and that they will not encourage actions that undermine the road to peace.

The negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians should provide the necessary impetus for talks between Israel and the Syrian Arab Republic to reach an understanding regarding the Golan Heights. Chile also hopes that resolution 425 (1978) will be fully implemented in southern Lebanon.

The Middle East region is very close to the hearts of all Chileans. Chile maintains excellent relations with the State of Israel and the neighbouring Arab countries, and strong ties with the Palestinian National Authority.

Chile has a sizeable Jewish population and a considerable population of Chileans of Arab origin, predominantly Palestinian. They all live side by side and demonstrate that coexistence is not only possible, but is extremely fruitful.

It is our most earnest wish that, sooner rather than later, successful coexistence can be brought about in the Middle East between Israelis and Palestinians and between Israel and all the neighbouring Arab States. That can only be to the benefit of succeeding generations in the region, and of peace and security throughout the world.

Mr. Dausá Céspedes (Cuba) (*interpretation from Spanish*): Solidarity with the Palestinian people is a matter of principle for the people and the Government of Cuba. This is reflected, *inter alia*, in our support and defence of unrestricted respect for all the legitimate rights of that long-suffering people. We have the same feeling and moral obligation towards other Arab populations experiencing the difficult and bitter situation of their territories being under Israeli occupation.

The item on the situation in the Middle East has been on the General Assembly's agenda for years. Unfortunately, the situation in the region continues to be characterized by a climate of tension and instability. All of the resolutions adopted by this organ at its regular and special sessions continue to be relevant. At this fifty-third session, consideration of the item is of unique importance and significance, given the current state of the Middle East peace process, which continues to undergo constant transformation and complication.

The Palestinian people and the peoples of all the occupied Arab territories are experiencing a more crucial moment in their history than ever before. Genuine efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region continue to be met with grave and hostile incidents provoked by the occupying Power, which persists in its policy of aggression and of threatening the peace process.

Cuba reiterates that it is necessary to end the Israeli occupation in all the occupied Arab and Palestinian territories, as well as the violation of human rights of the populations of those territories. It is necessary that the United Nations obtain the greatest political, legal and moral support for the cause of the Palestinian people and of all the peoples of the occupied Arab territories, and for the Middle East peace process.

The question of Palestine is at the heart of the Middle East conflict, and genuine political will is necessary to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the conflict. Cuba reaffirms once again the right of the Palestinian people to have an independent State, with Jerusalem as its capital, and rejects measures aimed at changing the legal status and demographic composition of that city. Cuba calls for the return of all the Arab territories occupied by Israel. We call for respect for the territorial integrity, the sovereignty and the internationally recognized boundaries of the States of the region. Cuba advocates respect for and the application of the principles of international humanitarian law to the Palestinian people and the peoples of the occupied Arab territories, and demands, in particular, the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention to Israeli actions in Palestinian territory and in all the occupied territories. The Palestinian people and the peoples of all the occupied Arab territories need the General Assembly and the

United Nations to play an effective role in the Middle East peace process.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in the debate on this item.

We shall proceed to consider draft resolutions A/53/L.52 and A/53/L.53 and Corr.1.

I now call on the representative of Israel, who wishes to speak in explanation of vote before the voting.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Gold (Israel): I believe that our discourse, even on very difficult issues, must be based on an attempt to achieve the greatest possible degree of accuracy when we discuss difficult matters. I first want to call attention to the fact that, although the expression "land for peace" seems relatively innocuous, and although in fact Israel has been redeploying in territories in recent weeks and will be continuing to redeploy in accordance with the Wye River Memorandum, we have been concerned that reference to "land for peace" is an attempt to put elements into the peace process that were not originally a part of the agreed terms of reference.

In that context, let me point out to the General Assembly that the expression "land for peace" does not appear anywhere in Security Council resolution 242 (1967) or 338(1973); the expression "land for peace" does not appear anywhere in the Madrid invitation; and, finally, the expression "land for peace" was not even used by United States President George Bush, in his address at the Madrid Peace Conference — in fact, he used another expression, which was "territorial compromise".

In the resolution being considered on the matter of the Golan Heights, there is reference to a specific boundary, known as the 4 June border. As I pointed out in my remarks yesterday, this boundary, which involves the acquisition of territory that was part of British Mandatory Palestine by Syria, entails rewarding Syrian military operations against Israel prior to 1967 and therefore stands in contradiction to resolution 242 (1967).

May I also point out that when Israel and Syria signed an Armistice Agreement in 1949, article V, paragraph 1, of that Agreement stated explicitly,

> "It is emphasized that the following arrangements for the Armistice Demarcation Line between Israeli and Syrian armed forces and for the Demilitarized Zone are not to be interpreted as having any relation whatsoever to ultimate territorial arrangements affecting the two Parties to this Agreement." (*United Nations Treaty Series, vol. 42, p. 332*)

In other words, the clear thrust of the terms of reference of Madrid and past agreements and understandings between the parties is that boundaries between us must be negotiated. As President Bush stated in Madrid, boundaries should reflect the quality of both security and political arrangements, and the United States is prepared to accept whatever the parties themselves find acceptable.

The problem we face here today is that the General Assembly is being called upon to predetermine the boundaries and to remove them from the area of negotiation. There are States that believe that only Israel will be called upon to do this, but let me point out that at least half the members of the General Assembly, if not more, have boundary conflicts, and if Israel is being called upon today to agree to a specified boundary, as opposed to a negotiation to determine secure and recognized borders, a precedent will be set for this world body. Therefore, those who have such boundary conflicts should be advised of this precedent and should consider it as they decide how to vote.

The Acting President: The Assembly will now take a decision on draft resolutions A/53/L.52 and A/53/L.53 and Corr.1.

We shall turn first to draft resolution A/53/L.52 entitled "Jerusalem". Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction, the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.52: Algeria and Malaysia.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize,

Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel

Abstaining:

Costa Rica, Marshall Islands, Samoa, Swaziland, United States of America, Uzbekistan, Zambia

Draft resolution A/53/L.52 was adopted by 149 votes to 1, with 7 abstentions (resolution 53/37).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Haiti and Mozambique informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The Acting President: Draft resolution A/53/L.53 and Corr.1 is entitled "The situation in the Middle East: the Syrian Golan".

Before proceeding to take action on the draft resolution, I should like to announce that since its introduction the following countries have become sponsors of draft resolution A/53/L.53 and Corr.1: Algeria and Malaysia.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Philippines, Qatar, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Costa Rica, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kenya, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Paraguay, Peru, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Samoa, San Marino, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon

Islands, Spain, Swaziland, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Ukraine, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Zambia

Draft resolution A/53/L.53 and Corr.1 was adopted by 97 votes to 2, with 58 abstentions (resolution 53/38).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Haiti and Mozambique informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President returned to the Chair.

The President *(interpretation from Spanish)*: I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote on the resolution just adopted. May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Sucharipa (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union in order to explain the vote of its member States on the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.53 and Corr.1.

The European Union reiterates its firm commitment to a just and comprehensive settlement in the Middle East based on the Madrid and Oslo accords. We warmly welcome the promising progress on the Palestinian track and encourage the parties to engage in final status negotiations as soon as possible. Likewise, we fully support early resumption of negotiations on the Lebanese and Syrian tracks.

As in previous years, the draft resolution regarding the Syrian Golan contains geographical references which prejudge the outcome of bilateral negotiations. That is why the countries of the European Union have again abstained in the voting.

The European Union regrets that this year, again, it has not been possible to reach agreement on the draft resolution on the Middle East peace process under this agenda item. We commend the initiators of the text — Norway, the Russian Federation and the United States — for their efforts to reach agreement with the interested parties.

Mr. Loğoğlu (Turkey): Turkey supported and voted in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.53 and Corr.1, on the Syrian Golan. However, I would like to clarify the position of my delegation on one aspect of the situation in the Middle East. We wish to emphasize once again that one of the most important obstacles to peace is terrorism. The countries which regrettably lend support and encouragement to terrorism must cease using that inhuman and destructive policy as leverage to advance their foreign policy interests.

Mr. Mársico (Argentina) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Argentine Republic voted in favour of the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.53 and Corr.1, on the Syrian Golan, because we believe that its main thrust relates to the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force. Article 2, paragraph 4, of the Charter prohibits the use or threat of use of force against the territorial integrity of any State. That is a binding norm of international law. I wish nonetheless to clarify the position of my delegation on paragraph 6 of the resolution. Argentina's vote does not necessarily prejudge the content of that paragraph, in particular its reference to the line of 4 June 1967.

Mr. Ocampo (Peru) (*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Peru abstained in the vote on the draft resolution contained in document A/53/L.53 and Corr.1. Our delegation is optimistic about the recent agreements reflected in the Wye River Memorandum of 23 October 1998. That important achievement provides a good opportunity to continue the peace process in the region, a process which Peru firmly supports, and whose most important attainments are embodied in the Oslo and Madrid agreements. In that context, Peru believes it necessary to make speedy efforts to resume the negotiations between the parties on the situation that is the subject of the resolution on the Syrian Golan. The Peruvian delegation considers that those negotiations can be effective only with the complete and timely implementation by the parties of their obligations under the peace process. In the view of Peru, the applicability of the resolutions adopted by the Security Council on this matter is a critical factor. In our view, in this process the United Nations has a primary role to play in promoting peace by fostering a political environment conducive to the removal of existing obstacles, and in supporting the process within the political framework agreed upon by the parties.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I call now on those representatives wishing to speak in exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Danesh-Yazdi (Islamic Republic of Iran): Yesterday, in the course of its deliberations on the situation in the Middle East, the General Assembly was presented with a totally distorted picture of the realities in the region. The representative of Israel, as is his habit, feigned innocence and made an attempt, futile though it was, to blame others for the volatility and instability in the Middle East. It should be clear that the harsh, bitter reality of Israel's central role in and ultimate responsibility for the perpetuation of this fragile and dangerous situation can hardly be papered over or negated by making fake and fictitious accusations against others, including my country.

As for the situation in southern Lebanon, it is interesting to note that Israel, after more than two decades of forcible occupation, does not even bother to heed the call of the international community, and in particular that of the Security Council, to withdraw unconditionally from the occupied territory of Lebanon. The resistance of the Lebanese people and their resolute determination to liberate their homeland from Israeli occupation are a legitimate right recognized by international law and thus can by no means be labelled as terrorism.

The Islamic Republic of Iran, in line with its principled position, feels bound to render humanitarian assistance as well as political and moral support to the Lebanese people in their legitimate struggle. Moreover, contrary to the mischievous divide-and-rule attempt of Israel to sow the seeds of suspicion among Islamic countries, Iran indeed enjoys very good and ever-expanding relations with other States in the region. And again, contrary to Israel's fulminations, Iran does not harbour hegemonic aspirations in the area, whether in the Persian Gulf or in the greater Middle East.

As my last point, let me affirm that the countries in the region simply do not need to be given a sermon on the merits of democracy and accountable and good governance, least of all by the representative of an aggressive occupying regime.

Mr. Gold (Israel): Israel voted against the draft resolutions contained in document A/53/L.52 and in document A/53/L.53 and Corr.1. Regarding draft resolution A/53/L.52, the position of Israel with regard to its capital in Jerusalem is well known and has been detailed on many occasions before this Assembly.

Concerning the draft resolution regarding the Golan, Israel has stated on many occasions, and at the highest levels, its willingness and interest in resuming its negotiations with Syria without any preconditions. However, the language of this resolution attempts to predetermine the outcome of these talks, which stands in contradiction to any genuine notion of fair negotiations.

In addition, the resolution refers to the principle of land for peace. It should be noted that the terms of reference of the Middle East peace negotiations were defined in the letter of invitation to the Madrid Peace Conference sent to the parties by the co-sponsors in October 1991. As I stated earlier, while those letters referred specifically to Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973) as the basis for the negotiations, there was no reference whatsoever to that principle of land for peace.

For those reasons, Israel voted against the two draft resolutions.

Israel regrets the fact that it will not be possible this year to adopt the draft resolution on the Middle East peace process, which has come to be known as the positive resolution. Israel has supported the adoption of such texts and has indeed played an important role in their promotion since they were first introduced in 1993. This is because we believe that the resolutions of the United Nations should reflect the achievements of the peace process and the new realities created in the area.

The positive resolutions, as adopted by the General Assembly in the years 1993 through 1996, were drafted after thorough and careful consultations among the parties concerned. That is why Israel believed that the language agreed upon in the past should serve as the basis for the draft resolution to be adopted this year as well.

Some parties stated in the past that they did not support the resolutions because they did not refer to Security Council resolution 425 (1978). This request was met this year, as Israel agreed to the inclusion of such a reference in the draft resolution.

The responsibility for the fact that the positive draft resolution will not be adopted this year lies with those who refuse to adhere to the language agreed upon in the past and who sought to turn the positive draft resolution into yet another one-sided resolution on the Arab-Israel conflict in the General Assembly.

We call upon the General Assembly to adapt its resolutions on the issue of the Arab-Israeli conflict to the new reality created in the region as a result of the

ongoing peace process, rather than to recycle the anachronistic and irrelevant resolutions of a bygone era.

Mr. Al-Hitti (Iraq) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation wishes to exercise its right of reply with regard to the statement made by the representative of Australia this morning.

First, the representative of Australia inserted the subject of Iraq into the debate on the question of the Israeli occupation of Arab territories and the continuation of Israel's aggressive practices against the Arab Palestinian people. At the same time he disregarded what Israeli occupation actually means — a stark violation of the Charter of the United Nations and all norms of international law. He did not utter a word of condemnation of the Israeli practices in question.

Secondly, the representative of Australia claimed that the continuation of the comprehensive sanctions and the continued suffering and plight of the Iraqi people were due to a lack of cooperation on the part of Iraq with the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) and its failure to produce documents requested by the Commission. This false logic is untenable because the comprehensive sanctions continue on account of a certain State's secret programme to mete out vengeance on the people of Iraq. Is it logical for the Commission to ask Iraq to produce a document that has nothing to do with disarmament and that does not even exist in the first place, and then link the plight of the Iraqi people with the failure to produce that fictitious document? Is it logical for more than 6,000 Iraqi children under the age of five years to be dying every month because the Commission is searching for a fictitious document? Did the representative of Australia read the documents and the statements of Mr. Scott Ritter to know specifically what documents the Special Commission is looking for?

The Australian representative spoke about the danger posed by Iraqi weapons of mass destruction and the threat they presented to regional and international security. However, it is no secret to anyone that after eight years of work by UNSCOM and the International Atomic Energy Agency, there are no more prohibited weapons in Iraq nor any installations or equipment of this sort. We would have liked for him to recall that Israel possesses over 200 atomic bombs, as well as chemical and biological weapons, that it refuses to accede to the international treaties in force in this respect and that it occupies the lands of Palestine and two other Arab countries by force, thus, in effect, posing that very threat to regional and international security.

Is there a more manifest example of double standards and political hypocrisy than what has been presented by the representative of Australia?

Mr. Elaraby (Egypt): I have asked to exercise my right of reply with regard to the statement made by the representative of Israel. Actually, he made the same statement twice with respect to the principle of land for peace, and I was intrigued to see his rationale and analysis with regard to that principle.

If we go back to basics, the genesis of all efforts to attain peace in the Middle East is no doubt Security Council resolution 242 (1967). When we look at that resolution, we see that it has corresponding obligations for the parties. The two basic corresponding obligations are, first, withdrawal and, secondly, the end of belligerency. Withdrawal is based on the principle in the preambular part of resolution 242 (1967), namely, the prohibition of the acquisition of territories by force. The two obligations together represent the principle of land for peace.

True, there is no reference in resolution 242 (1967) to the phrase "land for peace". But the two obligations together give the same impression, it is exactly as if I were to say today that there is no reference in that resolution to attaining peace and normal relations because the obligation in the resolution is to end belligerencies. That is not enough. We have to look at the origin, the concept and the rules of law. They are very clear here.

I cannot really understand why the principle of land for peace cannot be accepted by the representative of Israel. In point of fact, he referred to another matter, relating to the positive resolution. We did not have a positive resolution last year because there was really nothing positive to welcome, but this year there is. My delegation was one of those that were involved in the negotiations. We are very grateful to the delegations of the United States, the Russian Federation and Norway. We all worked together in good faith, but, unfortunately, the reference to land for peace was refused at the very end by Israel. That is why we do not have a positive resolution this year. We would have liked to have one, and we are grateful to those who worked for it, but it all has to do with land for peace. I was very much intrigued, and I must say that I cannot accept or subscribe to the interpretation given by Israel, because the principle of land for peace is an integral of the corresponding obligations of resolution 242 (1967), which he says his Government cannot accept.

Mr. Wehbe (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I should like to thank you, Mr. President, for your patience a few moments ago when the representative of Israel denied the existence of the principle of land for peace.

I should like first to reaffirm that that principle is entirely clear and is enshrined in the work of William Quandt entitled *Peace Process: American Diplomacy and the Arab-Israeli Conflict since 1967*. It can be found also in the letter of guarantees.

The principle of land for peace also stems from the text of resolution 242 (1967), which refers to the inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by force and which also calls for Israel's withdrawal. Is all this not sufficient to translate the letter and spirit of that resolution into the principle of land for peace? Or have the resolutions adopted by the Arab summits, the Non-Aligned Movement summits and the Organization of the Islamic Conference summits, as well as the statements of the European Union, all of which refer to that principle, formulated it from thin air? I do not think so. It is very difficult, therefore, to understand what the representative of Israel meant by that explanation, which is impossible to accept from his delegation.

Secondly, during the peace talks between Syria and Israel under United States sponsorship, Israel promised to withdraw from the Golan up to the line of 4 June 1967 in order to implement that principle. However, the current Government is reneging on that promise, as has been made clear on numerous occasions.

Thirdly, reference has been made to boundaries. Does that mean that Israel is the successor to the British mandate? Does this mean that Israel is more protective of Palestine and the Palestinians than are Syria and the Syrians, who are the brothers of the Palestinians? I do not think so. I think that this is a manoeuvre aimed at misleading this body. With respect to the boundaries in question, does Israel seek boundaries, and if so, which ones? I think that the facts prove that Israel does not want boundaries so that it can keep the door open to continued expansion and settlement construction to further its territorial ambitions. And herein lies its insatiable appetite for occupation, invasion and aggression.

The Arab side, on the other hand, presented effective proposals aimed at making a serious and sincere contribution to the resolution. But the Israeli representative rejected the introduction of the principle of land for peace, as my brother, the representative of Egypt, just stated a short while ago.

Mr. Hamdan (Lebanon): My delegation would like to exercise its right of reply to a number of the allegations made yesterday and today by the representative of Israel.

First, the Syrian presence in Lebanon is in accordance with the will of the Government and the people. That presence has greatly helped Lebanon to consolidate civil peace in the country after a destructive 17-year civil war. The progress made by Lebanon during the last few years in countering the ravages of that devastating war, which took the entire world by surprise, was achieved with the assistance of our Syrian brethren, and we are very appreciative of their efforts.

As Syria was engaged in restoring electricity and water to Lebanese towns and villages, Israel was destroying the infrastructures, plunging us back into darkness. Israel is continually threatening to do that again. The cooperation between Lebanon and Syria sets an example that others should follow within the framework of the concept of post-conflict peace-building.

As regards Israel's acceptance of resolution 425 (1978), we reiterate once again that Israel's conditional acceptance of that resolution is not valid. Israel must implement resolution 425 (1978) unconditionally. To insist on conditions would certainly damage the credibility of the United Nations and the Security Council, because that would imply a lack of confidence in the international community, which formulated that resolution and adopted it unanimously.

Israel continues to state that resistance to occupation is terrorism. No provision of international law would describe freedom fighters who battle against occupiers, against brute force and against occupation as terrorists. Israel, an occupying Power, should not expect to convince the General Assembly that Lebanese attacks on its military forces, which are equipped with tanks and other material, should be regarded as terrorists, while its own bombardment of civilian targets such as schools, hospitals and other public facilities should be labelled as Israeli acts of legitimate self-defence?

The Israeli occupation is continuing the vicious circle of destruction and violence. Therefore let the occupier withdraw. The concept of the security belt has failed, and security cannot prevail without respect for

international legality. The international community has dispatched soldiers to keep the peace there. Our Government is committed, when the occupier withdraws, to keep the peace and to discharge all of its responsibilities in accordance with international law. Why then does the occupation continue?

Israel may not want to listen to our views and positions, but how long can it ignore the Assembly's wisdom and position? The time has come for us to realize that genuine peace cannot be established without justice, and that justice cannot be realized unless there is respect for international legality, which has been established by this forum for many years now.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have heard the last statement in the exercise of the right of reply.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine): Let me take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation to all the Member States that voted in favour of the resolution on Jerusalem. The adoption of that resolution by such an overwhelming majority is just another indication of the international community's rejection of all illegal Israeli actions taken with regard to Jerusalem, as well as of the unique importance of Jerusalem for the whole international community. Today, only Israel voted against that resolution. We sincerely hope that the Israeli Government will reconsider that negative and dangerous position and will be in a position in the future to join the international consensus on this extremely important matter.

I also want to refer to the fact that the General Assembly this year was unable to adopt a draft resolution on the Middle East peace process, which in the past has been sponsored by Norway, the United States and the Russian Federation. In this regard, we express our appreciation for the efforts undertaken this year by the three sponsors to try to enable the Assembly to adopt such an important draft resolution. Unfortunately, it was not possible, specifically because of the refusal of the Israeli delegation to accept the term "land for peace". Frankly, we are not able to understand how anyone who is committed to peace in the Middle East could be in a position to refuse to accept the principle of land for peace. To do so is to be either against the return of land or against the establishment of peace. That principle is, in fact, the crux of Security Council resolution 242 (1967). But unfortunately, it seems that this is precisely the problem. Israel does not in fact want to return the occupied land to its rightful owner. I hope that this will not be the last word. I hope that there will be a serious reconsideration of that extremely negative and dangerous position — a position which undermines the basis of the Middle East peace process.

Finally, I must indicate that we hope that next year the Assembly will be able to adopt a draft resolution on the Middle East peace process. On our side, we will try our best to enhance that possibility. But I must add here that we will try, along with other interested parties, to present a draft resolution on the Middle East peace process regardless of the position of this or that party.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We have thus concluded this stage of our consideration of agenda item 40.

Agenda item 39 (*continued*)

Question of Palestine

Report of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People (A/53/35)

Report of the Secretary-General (A/53/652)

Draft resolutions (A/53/L.48, A/53/L.49, A/53/L.50, A/53/L.51)

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We shall now proceed to consider draft resolutions A/53/L.48, L.49, L.50 and L.51.

I shall first call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote before the voting.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Burleigh (United States of America): In the interest of time, I would like to give one explanation of vote that addresses all four draft resolutions that have been introduced under agenda item 39, "Question of Palestine". My Government opposes them all. These draft resolutions have been overtaken by events in the Middle East. Three of the draft resolutions promote institutions whose activities and approach to Middle East peace are unbalanced and outdated. They do nothing to support the process of negotiation, agreement and implementation of agreements now under way directly

between the parties concerned. They scarcely take note of the considerable achievements of the negotiating partners to date. If this body wants to criticize negative developments, it should also recognize positive developments.

Just days after the international community gathered in Washington at the Ministerial Conference to support Middle East Peace and Development and received pledges of over $3 billion in real assistance to improve the lot of the average Palestinian, it is particularly inappropriate to consider draft resolutions that drain away millions of dollars each year in precious financial and human resources that could better serve the cause of economic development in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.

The resolution entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine" injects the General Assembly into issues that are the subject of direct negotiation between the parties. This is inappropriate and unhelpful. At this sensitive moment, we want to support that process of negotiation rather than focus on issues or statements that divide and polarize. We want to produce results, not words. And we are producing results.

The United States strongly supports the achievement of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. To our regret, the unbalanced drafts before us complicate the achievement of that objective. We will vote against these four draft resolutions and invite others to do the same.

Mr. Gold (Israel): Israel will vote against the draft resolutions contained in documents A/53/L.48, L.49, L.50 and L.51. Draft resolutions A/53/L.48 and L.49 refer, respectively, to what are termed the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat. Since their inception, those bodies have obstructed dialogue and understanding through their one-sided and distorted portrayal of the Arab-Israeli conflict in general and its Palestinian component in particular. They are engaged in activities which hinder rather than promote progress towards achieving a peaceful, negotiated and mutually acceptable resolution to the problems which face the parties. In addition, those bodies expend valuable resources which could be better invested in responding to the real needs of the Palestinian population in the area. In an era of budgetary cutbacks in the United Nations, their lavish seminars and meetings involve a wasteful drain of funds which could be far better utilized for the Palestinians and for refugees throughout the world.

Draft resolution A/53/L.50 endorses the special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat. This programme, through its various seminars, missions and exhibits, also engages in the promotion of a distorted and one-sided perspective of the conflict.

Draft resolution A/53/L.51, while entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine", in effect promotes just the opposite. Any settlement must be founded upon mutual agreement reached in direct, face-to-face negotiations between the interested parties. However, this draft resolution seeks to impose a particular solution that is in keeping with the interests of one party and against the interests of the other. Not only does this undermine the progress being made in the negotiation of a settlement, it also stands in stark violation of the agreements already reached between the sides. It attempts to predetermine the outcome of negotiations on the permanent status which are now beginning. This is in direct contradiction to the accords signed between the parties, from the Declaration of Principles of September 1993 to the most recent Wye River Memorandum of October 1998.

Israel continues to believe that the only way to advance towards peace is to proceed on the course of direct negotiations, in accordance with the agreements already achieved between the parties and through their subsequent implementation in a full and reciprocal manner.

The recent Wye River Memorandum and the implementation which has followed in its wake prove that this is indeed the only way to make progress towards the goal of peace which is dear to all sides.

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): The Assembly will now take decisions on draft resolutions A/53/L.48, A/53/L.49, A/53/L.50 and A/53/L.51.

We turn first to draft resolution A/53/L.48, entitled "Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People". I wish to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, Brunei Darussalam has become a co-sponsor.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Guatemala, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Monaco, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/53/L.48 was adopted by 110 votes to 2, with 48 abstentions (resolution 53/39).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Cuba informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We turn next to draft resolution A/53/L.49, entitled "Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat". I wish to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, Brunei Darussalam and Qatar have become co-sponsors.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Algeria, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cyprus, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Djibouti, Egypt, El Salvador, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Jamaica, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Saint Lucia, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Albania, Andorra, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, Czech Republic, Denmark, Ecuador, Equatorial Guinea, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Marshall Islands, Monaco,

Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Samoa, San Marino, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/53/L.49 was adopted by 111 votes to 2, with 48 abstentions (resolution 53/40).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Cuba informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We turn next to draft resolution A/53/L.50, entitled "Special information programme on the question of Palestine of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat". I wish to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, Brunei Darussalam and Qatar have become co-sponsors.

A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:

Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:

Marshall Islands, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/53/L.50 was adopted by 156 votes to 2, with 2 abstentions (resolution 53/41).

[Subsequently, the delegations of Cuba and China informed the Secretariat that they had intended to vote in favour.]

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): We turn next to draft resolution A/53/L.51, entitled "Peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine". I wish to announce that, since the introduction of the draft resolution, Brunei Darussalam and Qatar have become co-sponsors. A recorded vote has been requested.

A recorded vote was taken.

In favour:

Afghanistan, Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Argentina, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bahamas, Bahrain, Bangladesh, Barbados, Belarus, Belgium, Belize, Benin, Bhutan, Bolivia, Botswana, Brazil, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Canada, Cape Verde, Chad, Chile, China, Colombia, Comoros, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Denmark, Djibouti, Ecuador, Egypt, El Salvador, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Estonia, Ethiopia, Finland, France, Gabon, Gambia, Georgia, Germany, Ghana, Greece, Grenada, Guatemala, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Haiti, Honduras, Hungary, Iceland, India, Indonesia,

Ireland, Italy, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Kazakhstan, Kenya, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Latvia, Lebanon, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malawi, Malaysia, Maldives, Mali, Malta, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mexico, Monaco, Mongolia, Morocco, Mozambique, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Niger, Nigeria, Norway, Oman, Pakistan, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Saint Lucia, Samoa, San Marino, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Solomon Islands, South Africa, Spain, Sri Lanka, Sudan, Suriname, Swaziland, Sweden, Syrian Arab Republic, Tajikistan, Thailand, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Togo, Trinidad and Tobago, Tunisia, Turkey, Ukraine, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United Republic of Tanzania, Uruguay, Vanuatu, Venezuela, Viet Nam, Yemen, Zambia, Zimbabwe

Against:
Israel, United States of America

Abstaining:
Marshall Islands, Nicaragua, Uzbekistan

Draft resolution A/53/L.51 was adopted by 154 votes to 2, with 3 abstentions (resolution 53/42).

[Subsequently, the delegation of Cuba informed the Secretariat that it had intended to vote in favour.]

The President (*interpretation from Spanish*): I shall now call on those representatives who wish to speak in explanation of vote after the vote.

May I remind delegations that explanations of vote are limited to 10 minutes and should be made by delegations from their seats.

Mr. Macedo (Mexico)(*interpretation from Spanish*): The delegation of Mexico voted in favour of draft resolution A/53/L.51 because it believes that the solution to the question of Palestine is vital to the settlement of the Middle East conflict. However, I would like to make the following statement regarding the substance of operative paragraph 3.

Mexico takes note that one of the basic understandings in the peace process in the Middle East has been the exchange of land for peace. The land-for-peace formula has proved its usefulness in the search for a solution to this particular conflict. However, it would seem risky to make it a universal legal principle to be applied as a norm in all conflicts.

Higher than that basic understanding is the general principle of international law holding that conquest does not grant territorial rights. We all recognize, as a fundamental norm, that the acquisition of land through the use of force is inadmissible. As a corollary to this universal principle, it must be concluded that the entirety of any territory occupied during an armed conflict must be returned to its legitimate owner without conditions.

Mr. Jemat (Brunei Darussalam), Vice-President, took the Chair.

For these reasons, the delegation of Mexico reiterates that, while we recognize the political value of the basic understanding, we feel it would be unsound to raise it to the level of a general principle of international law. Mexico would like to call once again for greater precision in the language used to describe a political understanding that is not, and cannot be, a universal legal principle. In fact, in the next to the last preambular paragraph of draft resolution A/53/L.53, entitled "The situation in the Middle East: the Syrian Golan", of which the Mexican delegation also voted in favour, the term used to describe this understanding is more correct: it speaks of "the formula of land for peace". Unfortunately, this was not well translated into Spanish and I will be grateful if the Secretariat will have that corrected. That is the term that Mexico would prefer to see in all the draft resolutions on this subject. For Mexico it is a question of legal purity in the use of terms, and not a question of the substance of the political understanding.

Mr. Manz (Austria): I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union in order to explain the vote of its member States on the draft resolutions concerning the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People, contained in document A/53/L.48, and the Division for Palestinian Rights of the Secretariat, contained in document A/53/L.49.

In spite of difficulties in the Middle East peace process, important progress has been made over the years with a view to establishing a just, comprehensive and durable peace in the area. The European Union regrets

that the mandate of the two United Nations entities in charge of the question of Palestine do not better take into account the spirit of the peace process. That is why the European Union has, as in previous years, abstained in the voting on the two draft resolutions.

However, the European Union welcomes the ongoing dialogue with the Bureau of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People. We are prepared to continue this exchange of views with the particular aim of adapting the mandate and the activities of the Committee to the spirit of the Madrid and the Oslo accords in order to allow full support of and a constructive contribution to the peace process.

Mr. Abou-Hadid (Syrian Arab Republic) (*interpretation from Arabic*): My delegation voted in favour of draft resolution A/53/L.51, which has just been adopted. Our agreement on it does not indicate our support of or opposition to the agreement on the Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements, signed by the Palestine Liberation Organization and Israel, as referred to in the tenth and eleventh preambular paragraphs of the draft resolution and in operative paragraph 2.

As for the ninth preambular paragraph, we wish to reiterate here that full Israeli withdrawal from all the occupied Arab territories, the realization of a just and comprehensive peace and the implementation of the guidelines and the terms of reference of the Madrid Conference and the land-for-peace principle is the right course for all the States of the region to live in peace within secure and recognized borders.

My delegation also wishes to thank the States that have sponsored and voted in favour of the draft resolution on the Syrian Golan, especially the new States that have supported justice by voting in favour of it.

The Acting President: We have heard the last speaker in explanation of vote.

I now call on the Observer of Palestine.

Mr. Al-Kidwa (Palestine) (*interpretation from Arabic*): I wish to take this opportunity to express once again our appreciation to all the Member States that have supported the four resolutions adopted under the agenda item entitled "Question of Palestine". We believe that all four of these resolutions are very important to the question of Palestine and the United Nations. As all members know, these resolutions include the United Nations machinery for work related to the question of Palestine, in addition to the peaceful settlement of the question of Palestine. This is provided for in the resolution which includes the principles for a peaceful settlement.

I also wish to express special appreciation to the members of the Committee on the Exercise of the Inalienable Rights of the Palestinian People and its Chairman, the Permanent Representative of Senegal, Ambassador Ibra Deguène Ka.

My delegation regrets the statement of the United States of America on these resolutions. We, of course, have a different position, which we have repeatedly expressed in the past, and there is no need to repeat once again the clarifications we have already made.

I think that Israel's position has become provocative not only to the delegation of Palestine but also to the entire membership of the General Assembly. We feel there is nothing to be gained from an additional reply to the statement and position of Israel.

The Acting President: The Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 39.

Programme of work

The Acting President: I should like to draw the Assembly's attention to some matters concerning the commemoration of the fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Members will recall that, in a letter by the President of the General Assembly dated 25 November 1998 addressed to all permanent representatives to the United Nations, the President informed delegations of the necessity of holding three meetings, on account of the high number of Member States already inscribed on the list of speakers for the commemoration. As of today, there is a total of 102 Member States and two observers already inscribed.

In this connection, the President also recommended limiting statements to five minutes in order to ensure that all statements will be heard on 10 December.

If there is no objection, may I take it that the General Assembly decides to limit the length of

statements to be made in the plenary during the Commemoration to five minutes?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: I should now like to inform members that, in a letter dated 30 September 1998 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Germany to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of September, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the Observer of Switzerland on agenda item 46, "Fiftieth anniversary of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights".

Also, in a letter dated 14 October 1998 addressed to the President of the General Assembly, the Permanent Representative of Andorra to the United Nations, in his capacity as Chairman of the Group of Western European and other States for the month of October, requests that the General Assembly hear in plenary meeting a statement by the Observer of the Holy See on agenda item 46.

Taking into account the importance attached to the issue under discussion in agenda item 46, it is proposed that the General Assembly take a decision on those two requests.

May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the Observer of Switzerland on this agenda item?

It was so decided.

The Acting President: May I take it that there is no objection to the proposal to hear the Observer of the Holy See on this agenda item?

It was so decided.

The meeting rose at 1.15 p.m.